

BRISBANE IN 1888

THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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1989

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CHAPTER 2

OLD FROGS HOLLOW: DEVOID OF INTEREST, OR A DEN OF INIQUITY?

by Rod Fisher

When Australia reached its first century, a batch of celebratory treatises lauded Brisbane to the skies. While mining, construction, immigration and investment continued to boom, such publications exuded confidence in progress and pride in place. Prominent buildings, major institutions, noble vistas and self-made men were presented page after page as readers were conducted tourist-like around Queensland's burgeoning capital [in BHG 1987a].

Then, as now, the centre of attention was commercial Queen Street, though deference was shown towards the social and political status of George Street and the southern end and the mercantile concentration around Eagle Street at the other. Fronting the river between Eagle and George Streets, the Botanic Gardens with Queen's Park were particularly admired. But in the midst of this circle of excellence was old Frogs Hollow [see Illustration 1].

Sloping down from George and Elizabeth Streets towards the river, this low-lying area was either skirted altogether by these guides, or glossed over in contrast with glorious Queen Street. More specifically Andrew Garran's compendium commented unfavourably upon its appearance and origin:

The streets running parallel with Queen Street are still strongly marked with the provincial aspect. Retail trade, wherever an overflow from Queen Street has occurred, has generally turned round corners and extended along cross avenues. The higher portions of the parallel streets are consequently occupied for the most part only by small residences with the exception of Elizabeth Street, where a large livery establishment and the Theatre Royal ... lead down to ranges of shops. For the rest, the buildings are heterogeneous, the modern brick structure standing cheek and jowl alongside of old-time shingled cottages of wood and vacant lots. Towards the wharves the case is different. The lower ends of these streets are fronted by blocks of substantial stores and merchants' offices. Generally the roadways are macadamized and well-kept, but the footpaths vary from primitive earth to stretches of asphalted concrete, fronting some store or factory of the better class. Part of the area traversed by these streets is "made ground". Originally there was in the central space a swampy depression which early was endowed with the name of Frog's Hollow, in consequence of the vocal efforts of the batrachians which made night hideous in its neighbourhood. All this was under maize during the penal occupation, and had been denuded of timber by the prisoners. Generally the streets are devoid of interest. Standing on what was a cultivated field, or on "made ground" of comparatively recent date, they neither claim attention by present development as parts of a modern city, nor are they invested with interest by traditional associations [in BHG 1987a, pp.104-5; cf. Feilberg in *ibid.* pp.81-82 cf. Illustration 6].



7 Mary Street c.1883, looking north, including old Queensland Club (left) and Perkins Brewery (right)



8 Edward Street 1890, towards the gardens, with the Port Office (left), Shamrock Hotel and Temperance Boarding House (right)

Such negative accounts might have stifled the curiosity of visitors and historians alike, but for contrary reports by other contemporaries about life in old Frogs Hollow. These appeared particularly in the columns of the Brisbane courier, the inspection book of the municipal medical officer Dr Joseph Bancroft, the report of the Shops, Factories and Workshops Commission and the newspaper sketches by William Lane, the socialist critic. It was Lane who invited readers to 'Walk down Albert-street on any night in the week, if you care to venture through its suffocatingly significant aroma of opium and insanitation, and among its prowling gangs of wolf-like larrikins, and its filthy swarm of cursing slatterns' (Boomerang 14 January 1888, p.8).

Devoid of interest, yet a den on iniquity! How could we refuse such an opportunity to pry into the condition of life at old Frogs Hollow.

Though water-logged and frog-ridden from the beginning, the land was surveyed as part of the town's grid system and sold off in twenty subdivisions per portion after free settlement in 1842. From Queen Street, Albert and Edward Streets ran downhill towards the Gardens, intersected by Elizabeth, Mary, Margaret and Alice Streets which dipped into the hollow from George street. This made the area some four blocks wide by two blocks deep, with Albert and side streets as its backbone.

Being a water catchment with a tidal swamp and several creeks, including an outlet around Margaret Street, Frogs Hollow was inundated by any high spring tide or 'fresh' in the river, let alone a real flood. Consequently the area was drained extensively and filled to about two metres above the high water mark. But since these improvements were made piecemeal between 1859 and 1894, various properties remained below the level of adjacent drains, streets and 'made ground' for much of the time (see Richard 1980 & BHG 1988a, no.122).

As town planning and building regulations were negligible, it was this haphazard combination of man and nature which produced the rather disparate streetscape of Frogs Hollow by the late 1880s. Despite the economic boom and proximity to the centre of town, some lots remained vacant or boasted a single building, while others were crowded with attached or semi-detached structures of two or more storeys, often built in brick or stone and tin, as this was ostensibly a 'first class' area after the great Queen Street fires of 1864. But many were old board and shingle structures with sub-floors which were virtually sinking into the mire from dry rot, white ants, jerry-building and sheer neglect (see Illustrations 7 & 8).

That other areas of inner Brisbane were irregular in appearance and inferior in building is quite apparent from contemporary sources. Nevertheless many of their first generation gable-roofed houses were being replaced or interspersed by the newer pyramid-roofed variety, as well as stylistic public, commercial and industrial buildings. The latter development was also taking place at old Frogs Hollow in the 1880s, but the bulk of its houses and shops remained in worse condition, judging by the detailed reports of Dr Joseph Bancroft (John Oxley Library MS OM72-153).

Between 1887 and 1891 this diligent medical health officer and other municipal dignitaries conducted sanitary inspections throughout the streets of Fortitude Valley, Spring Hill, Petrie-Terrace and the city. By far the largest number of trouble spots were found in the Frogs Hollow area, aggravated by serious flooding in late 1887 and early 1890 (see Illustration 9).

		Joseph Byrne's (Chas Sanders)		Sielberg's Bdg Hse	Edward
European Bdg Hse		• Alex. Wilson's cooperage		Mortimer & Guilfoyle's coachworks	
McArthur & Co. houses		John Davis' Bdg Hse & cottages		• ← Quinn's Bdg Hse	
Mrs O'Keefe's cottages		Evans, Anderson & Phelan's Chinese shop		Wm Richards	
Keith & Son, tinsmiths	Solomon Rosenthal's	Mrs Mary O'Brien's houses		• F.W. Wilson's factory	Mrs Mary O'Brien's houses
Adolf Neuman's tailoring estab,	Virginia Tabacco factory	Alex McLean's cottages			
R. Jarmans saddle factory	Leichhardt or Perzils Bdg Hse	Yuen Sing Tai's shop	cottage	Mrs Maria Naylor's houses	Albert Also Nellie Lake's house in Albert Street
Robert E. Burton's workshop	Alex McLean's cottages		Brisbane Steam Confectionery works	Jas Kay's Tinsmiths estab.	
					George
Elizabeth	Charlotte	Mary	Margaret	Alice	

Also Aaron Woods &
Louis Trials cottages
in Mary street

9 Old Frogs Hollow inspections 1887-1891:

- Dr Joseph Bancroft, medical health officer, BMC 1887-91
- Inspector Robert Lee-Bryce, Brisbane Municipal Council 1891

Of at least 55 buildings concerned, some 42 were used as dwellings, their condition being similar to the following structures near the corner of Charlotte and Albert Streets:

The premises of Mrs. O'Brien in Charlotte Street were visited. The buildings are now four feet below the level of the road, very old, built of wood and in a decayed and insanitary condition. The back row of dormitories stand on wet ground and are as well as the front premises unfit for habitation (10 April 1888).

Some of the premises investigated were used for purposes additional to housing:

In Mary Street was inspected the cottage of Aaron Wood used as a dwelling and fruit-store. The premises are below the level of the street. The verandah floor is much decayed and breaking up. Two sheds at the back are falling to pieces. There is no spouting and the house underneath is wet and smells badly from rotten fruit. The allotment requires to be drained and filled up: the house to be raised (21 February 1890).

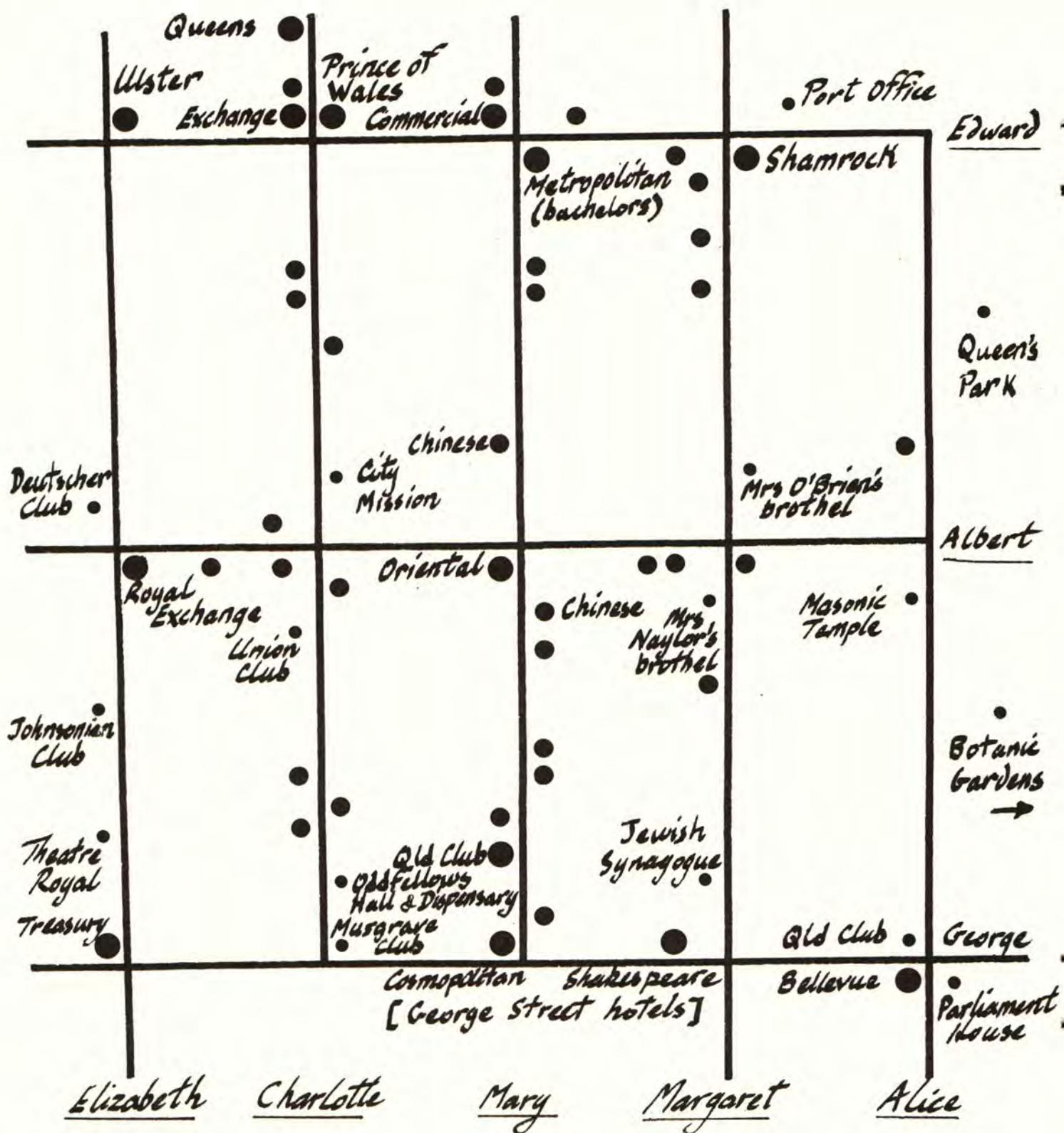
Most of these old dwellings, constituting about a quarter of the 200 or so buildings in the area used for housing, were deemed insanitary, if not uninhabitable, because of damp and dirt as well as decay.

At the same time Bancroft reported on 5 of the boarding houses in the area (see Illustration 10). Sielberg's in Edward Street was not only lacking in paint, but the wallpaper was mouldy because of the porosity of the brickwork (18 September 1887). The back verandah floor and shingle roof of Davis' in Charlotte Street were rotten and its rear sheds and closets were dilapidated, while at the European boarding house, a brick and stone building opposite, the two storeyed front verandahs were broken and decayed, the timber roofing over the core, kitchen and sheds was rotten, and the lower storey below street level was quite damp (29 March 1890). Worst of all the deterioration of the former Cobb & Co. coaching establishment in Albert Street, which was then operating as the Leichardt (or Persel's) boardinghouse, was highlighted in three reports, starting in 1887:

The Leichardt Boarding House is an old building. It is dangerous to walk on the verandahs and back stairs. The windows are broken, the sashes do not open - particularly the upper ones and ventilation is consequently defective. All the back out-houses and stables are falling to pieces. A series of iron sleeping-rooms have more recently been erected at the rear and have some advantages in that the material is unabsorbent of putrescent matters (8 September 1887).

The picture was much the same seven months later when the stables were condemned and the cellar was described as 'undrained and to a great extent filled with mud' (10 April 1888). The final report conveyed the decrepid condition of this abode most graphically:

The place is at present unoccupied to a great extent, but in the rooms lie old clothes & maize husks, formerly the stuffing of mattresses. As far as the latter are concerned, I am of the opinion that there is danger of them taking fire as the place is open and unprotected against nocturnal visitors.



10 Old Frogs Hollow venues 1888:

● Hotels

• Boardinghouses

• Other

The main building is brick with stone rubble foundations. Galvanised iron roofs. The brick walls have given way in many places from the defective nature of the rubble foundations and the subsidences are in some parts not free from danger to residents. One door-way arch has fallen somewhat and is supported by wooden pegging; the ceiling plaster has come down in large patches from the same cause: part of the flooring in the room nearest to Lupton's stoveworks dips from the horizontal due to the wall at the end and chimney having subsided on the insecure rubble foundation. There is a cellar always damp; and insanitary. All the premises are in bad repair, much dilapidated, insanitary and unfit to be used as dwellings or otherwise occupied in their present condition. They require extensive repairs, cleansing, painting and disinfecting. The main building needs new foundations (1 May 1891).

Old buildings such as this were pressed into service to house the expansive population of the 1880s, so that the number of boarding houses in the area multiplied from about 15 to over 30 without counting ordinary lodgings (Queensland post office directories 1878-79 cf. 1888 & 1889).

Apart from noting that the trapdoor to the Royal Exchange at the Albert and Elizabeth Street corner was dangerous to pedestrians, Bancroft had little to say about hotel accommodation (see Map). However, 5 of the 10 local pubs were amply depicted in the 1888 Aldine history of Queensland - the Ulster, Commercial, Metropolitan and Shamrock hotels on Edward Street corners and the Queen's at the corner of Charlotte and Creek Streets, in addition to the Royal Exchange (in BHG 1987a, pp.200-6). Being close to town and controlled by the licensing court, these mostly masonry buildings of some 14 to 38 rooms were praised for their spaciousness, airiness and cleanliness, as well as excellent rooms, tables, bars, cellars, furnishings and other facilities, not to mention city views from their double verandahs. Like the iron-laced Shamrock at the Edward and Mary Street corner, now the Port Office Hotel, these establishments were said to be ably run and doing well:

... since entering the hotel business [Mr Alexander Macdonald] has achieved a reputation as an efficient manager, visitors to the Shamrock finding nothing to complain of on the score of comfort or convenience. The house is pleasantly situated near the Botanic Gardens. It is extremely commodious, containing (besides public and private bars and an attractive club room) fifteen bedrooms, one drawing room, two bath rooms, and four public rooms on the ground floor. A first-rate table is kept, all seasonable delicacies being furnished in profusion; whilst the choice brands of liquors dispensed has ensured to Mr. Macdonald a good trade (see Illustrations 8 & 10).

Despite such seeming luxury, most of these buildings derived from the 1860s, though the new Ulster Hotel was but a decade old and the Queen's had been lately renovated. The old Duke of Edinburgh at the southwest corner of Albert and Charlotte Streets as well as the Queensland Hotel next to the Metropolitan had dropped out of the race. The only recent acquisition was the Queensland Club Hotel in upper Mary Street, but this had been an old elite house before a stint as the club itself. In other words, the hostellries of old Frogs Hollow might have maintained a two to four star rating in the 1880s, but by and large the great rebuilding which occurred in other areas passed them by.



11 Edward Street 1889, looking east from Charlotte Street, including Moores Buildings (centre) and Metropolitan Hotel (Mary Street cnr.)



12 Albert Street 1893, looking east from Elizabeth Street, with Royal Exchange Hotel (right), Harper's Factory and Chinese quarter (left centre)

If the condition of hotels was static, while housing stock was deteriorating, the level of business activity had intensified. The street directories indicate that, though business was quite prominent by the late 1870s, during the following decade this sector grew significantly at the expense of the residential component (QPOD 1878-79 cf. 1888 & 1889).

Because of its strategic position, the Frogs Hollow area supported many small businesses, especially grocer, butcher and fruit shops, footware and clothing stores, and outlets for the products of craftsmen including jewellery, furnishings and leathergoods. That some of these businesses were located in deficient residential premises is indicated by Bancroft's reports, their condition being similar to the following cases:

I visited the shop occupied by Joseph Byrne, shoemaker in Edward Street and found the building incomplete, there being no wall, the yard disorderly and the place unfit to be used as a dwelling or otherwise occupied.

The shop, a fruiterer's adjoining the above occupied by Mr. Charles Saunders, was visited. The interior was found tidy and clean. The walls and roof are much injured by white ants and decay at present; the premises are so defective as to be unfit to be used as a dwelling or otherwise occupied (22 December 1890).

Whereas much of the small retail and consumer business was confined to inferior premises and often combined with housing, the larger, more commercial and wholesale undertakings were better accommodated in substantial, storeyed and stylish buildings which proliferated during the 1880s. In Edward Street, amongst a concentration of similar structures around the southeastern corner of Charlotte Street, was Moore's Buildings, a three-storeyed plus basement Italianate complex, housing various agents, importers, merchants and ironmongers, as well as F. Crawford, the contracting bookseller and stationer to the Queensland Education Department. The names of these entrepreneurs were writ large on their buildings and their presence recorded for posterity in the street directories and Aldine history of 1888: Fleming of Albert Street; Hertzberg, Brabant, Wallace, Sniders and Kenion of Charlotte Street; Hoffnung of Lower Charlotte and Mary Streets; Fenwick, Stodart, Laird, Unmack, Leslie and Butler of Edward Street; Steele, Benjamin, McArthur and Nott of Elizabeth Street; Atthow and Webster of Mary Street, amongst others. Printing firms were also prominent in this area, especially Woodcock & Powell and Davison & Metcalfe in Charlotte Street, Cleghorn & Son in Edward Street, and J.H. Reynolds and Gordon & Gotch in Elizabeth Street. Though the northwestern blocks had a longstanding connection with the mercantile precinct beyond, this was appreciably strengthened during the bustling 1880s (see Illustration 11).

However, the greatest impact upon the area as a whole was made by industry of varying kinds. As in Fortitude Valley, Kangaroo Point and South Brisbane, small workshops had intermingled for many years with houses, shops and businesses, especially near the town end of Albert and Edward Streets and towards the river end of the latter (see QPOD 1879-89). But by the late 1880s workshops had spread throughout the area and increased in scale, as well as diversifying, particularly in the clothing, footware, saddlery, furniture, building, coachmaking, decorating, ship-fitting, and metalworking trades. Their names pepper the pages of the 1888 street directories and Aldine history. They range from small concerns - a workroom with a single artisan perhaps - to factories employing dozens of hands. Even in the coachmaking business, which required several skills, the scale varied considerably. For example, the newly formed Federal Carriage Co. in

Elizabeth Street consisted of a coachsmith, bodymaker, painter and trimmer, compared with Mortimer & Guilfoyle of Mary Street, who had been in business for about two years and employed twelve hands. But McCormack & Co. had long been established next door: their 130 by 30 foot no.1 showroom displayed the best imported and local vehicles, while repairs and alterations were being carried out in a 132 by 40 foot outer shed; then came the busy smith's shop, with the wheelers' and bodymakers' shop upstairs, and the trimming shop next door; downstairs was no.2 showroom for light spring waggons, followed by offices back towards the front (see Illustration 13).

Obviously the expansion of workshops occurred at the expense of existing structures, which were either adapted or replaced for industrial and commercial purposes. One of the most prominent purpose-built edifices remaining today is the three-storeyed range of Italianate warehouse buildings constructed at Margaret Street in 1887 for the four Watson Brothers, plumbers, gasfitters, sanitary engineers and ironworkers. As noted at the time, 'Everything is finished off in the best style, the staircase and fittings being of cedar, and the ventilation was found to be very good' [Builders and Contractors news 19 November 1887 cf. BHG 1888a, no.120 cf. Illustration 15].

Other firms were confirmed to inferior premises, including 6 or more of Dr Bancroft's hard cases, involving a saddlery, iron joiner's shop, builder's lumber store, coachbuilder's office and vehicle store, coachworks and cooperage. At least 3 of these were converted from dilapidated dwellings, with some success for Mortimer & Guilfoyle who also removed the kitchen and were filling up the yard by 1891. But the decayed shingles of the old cottage still used by the principal coachbuilder Alexander McLean as an office and shed rendered it unfit for occupation. More so the following workshop which had been established for over a decade and employed six hands in 1888:

In Edward Street the cooperage of Mr. Alex. Wilson ... was found much neglected and dilapidated. The greater part of these wooden structures are very old and decayed. Not being used for sleeping accommodation it was urged by the tenant that the place was good enough for a workshop. The roof is very defective and from its irregular state it is impossible to drain and make the flooring clean (8 August 1890 cf. Aldine history cf. Illustration 9).

Whereas most of these buildings were defective structurally, R. Jarman's saddlery on the west side of Elizabeth Street was particularly filthy, and hence a health hazard for workmen:

There is a want of cleanliness in the yard and in the cellar is a lot of refuse stuffing which gives out a bad smell, the grating being insufficient for ventilation except under circumstances of great cleanliness.

The ground level where there are workmen engaged has no ventilation in front except when the door is opened. It was here that the deceased workman ate. There is a considerable collection of old leather under the bench and the smell is foul. The upper floor is much better as there are windows on three sides (12 November 1889).

That adverse conditions existed in other workshops was apparent to the city inspector, Robert Lee-Bryce, who accompanied the Shops, Factories and Workshops Commissioners during their perambulations in 1891, and reported accordingly:

Mr. Adolph Neuman's Tailoring Establishment, Albert Street

The workshops are situated on the upper floor. One is to accommodate twenty-five male and female workers, with a space of about 220 cubic feet for each. The workshop is well lighted by means of seven glass windows. The workshop is not ventilated, and each of the windows is nailed down by means of screw nails. The second workshop is to accommodate three male hands, with about 300 cubic feet of space for each. The walls of the workshops are clean, but the floors and inside stairs are very dirty. The floors are said to be swept daily, and washed occasionally. The alleged occasional washing of the floors and stair may be questioned. The sanitary arrangements are fairly good.

Mr. John Kay, Sanitary Engineer, Charlotte Street.

Seven men and boys are employed in the workshop, the cubical contents of which afford ample space for the workers, although the ceiling is rather low. There is a forge in one corner which causes the shop to be filled with smoke to a disagreeable extent, and there is also a considerable amount of goods lying about. Closet accommodation is sufficient.

Mr. Wm. L. Eldridge Confectioner, Charlotte Street.

The workshop is of fairly good dimensions, but rather low in the ceiling; contains a boiler for two pans, and also one gas jet; is lighted by means of three glass windows, and is not in a very clean condition.

The floor is said to be occasionally washed. A 3-horse power engine for grinding sugar stands immediately outside the workshop, and is not fenced off. Closet accommodation is sufficient.

The actual buildings might have been the responsibility of owners and employers but, as one of the commissioners pointed out, the insanitary conditions in may instances 'were rendered much worse by the apathy and untidiness of the workpeople, who very often did not trouble to avail themselves of the means for keeping their workrooms in a clean and pure condition' (Qld parliamentary papers 1891, vol.2).

Through workshops were certainly making their mark in old Frogs Hollow, the proliferation of larger manufacturing and engineering complexes was much more striking. Industrial enterprises were hardly new to the area, which saw the early establishment of Alexander McLean's coach and implement factory in Elizabeth Street and William Edds' coachworks in Albert Street as well as F. W. Wilson & Co's steam biscuit manufactory and Perkins & Co.'s City Brewery next to each other in Mary Street and Hunter's boot factory in Elizabeth Street, plus the engineering works of Peter Nichol & Co and Robert R. Smellie & Co's Queensland Foundry in Alice Street, and Williams Hood's City Foundry in Elizabeth Street (see QPOD 1878-79). Though McLean and Hunter moved their factories elsewhere by the late 1880s, the expansion of other establishments and the incursion of new companies consolidated the presence of larger-scale industry (see QPOD 1888 & 1889; Aldine history; BHG 1988a, nos 35, 122; cf. Illustrations 13 & 15).

Elizabeth	Charlotte	Mary	Hood & Birnie brassfounders	W. & J. Sonter brassfounders, Edward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleghorn & Son printers • Gordon & Gatch, printers • • • Woodstock Powell Davidson & Metal, printers • Virginia Tobacco Factory • Wm Edd, watchbldr 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Wilson, cooper • • • • Evans, Anderson & Phalon, engineers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mortimer & Co • H. H. McCorquodale & Co, coachbuilders • • • Perkins, Brewery • F. W. Wilson, Biscuit factory • C. W. Madison, contractor • Robert Harper & Co, factory. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvey, Sergeant & Co. • Smellie & Co. • Smith, Forrester & Co, engineers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alex McLean watchbuilder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brisbane Steam confectionery • Jas Kay, plumber • Beale & Co, piano mfrs 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overend & Co engineers • Watson Bros, plumbers
				Albert
				George

13 Old Frogs Hollow industrial and mercantile premises 1888:
● Factories, etc. ● Workshops ● Warehouses, etc. (examples)

Most of these major manufacturing concerns developed at the expense of existing buildings in addition to using vacant land. As depicted by Cassell's compendium 1887, Perkins City Brewery 'is now a compact pile of buildings, with spacious cellarage, extending from Mary Street to Margaret Street, and with a five-storeyed tower for brewing process' (in BHG 1987a, p.133). At the south side of the brewery, Wilson's biscuit factory also expanded through to Margaret Street to accommodate double the building space, additional machinery and an average of fifty employees by 1888 (see Illustration 7). In Charlotte Street near the Albert Street intersection, an old store was evidently adapted for the Australian Tobacco Manufacturing Co. in 1886, and upgraded as the Virginia Tobacco Works by Frederick W. Heinecke two years later. However, the factory of the year was no doubt the office-warehouse and milling complex constructed at the corner of Albert and Mary Streets for Robert Harper & Co., tea, coffee and eastern produce importers, manufacturers and millers of Melbourne and Sydney. Designed by the top architect F.D.G. Stanley in Italian renaissance style and built in brick and cement with iron columns and joists for £11 000, the three-storeyed plus basement complex featured the latest machinery and lifts driven by a gas engine as well as iron fire doors throughout. For the benefit of workers, including nine clerks and five commercial travellers, the spacious rooms were well lit by gas, lavatories were provided on each floor and due provision was made for ventilation throughout (Aldine history; Builder & contractors news 19 May 1888; see Illustration 12 & 15).

Further encroachments were made by the engineering works. Situated in the Charlotte Street hollow, with a back entrance opposite the Perkins and Wilson's plants, were the ironfounding, shipbuilding and engineering premises of the up-and-coming Evans, Anderson, Phelan & Co. In Edward Street near the Gardens, Hood's iron and brass foundry had become Hood & Binnie's, while W. & J. Souter had also established themselves there as brassfounders. Around the corner in Alice Street, Smellie & Co. continued as engineers and machinery importers, but their repair and manufacturing plant on the southern side was then operated by Smith, Forrester & Co. Being replete with modern machinery, the fitting shop, foundry, pattern-shop, boiler-shop and blacksmithery of their Queensland Ironworks produced much of the cast iron posts and balustrading for boomtime building as well as the sugar plant, gold-crushing machinery, defence equipment and steamships. On the other side of Smellie's, the engineering works of Harvey, Sergeant & Co. had rapidly expanded their workforce from a mere six hands in 1880 to seventy-two by 1888, and were extending the premises accordingly. Concentrating on ironworks, brickmachines, girders and agricultural works, this successful business supplied some of the largest construction projects, including the new Courier Building. However, the specialists in railway engineering and imported machinery were A. Overend & Co. who were responsible for many a major government contract. By 1888 their head office and machinery warehouse extended from Alice Street back along Albert towards Margaret Street, but the engineering works were then located at Woolloongabba. Riding high on the crest of colonial development, all of these firms together, whether engineering complexes, manufacturing plants or lesser workshops, made old Frogs Hollow the principal industrial precinct of Brisbane (see Aldine history).

The condition of industrial premises obviously varied as greatly as commercial buildings. While some firms built showpieces, others made do with whatever structure was at hand. Yet only one detrimental case appears in Bancroft's reports:

In Mary street the roof of premises of Messrs, Evans, Anderson & Phelan was found much dilapidated, the shingles rotten and falling to pieces. Failing reconstruction of the roof I am of the opinion that the place is insanitary and unfit for occupation (21 February 1890).

However, the Shops, Factories and Workshops Commission of 1891 visited two of the larger establishments operating in 1888, as reported by Inspector Lee-Bryce:

Messrs F.W. Wilson and Co's Steam Biscuit Factory, Mary Street

On the street floor is the packing-room, which measures 64 feet x 12 feet, and in which twelve girls and two men are employed. It is hardly possible to estimate the space allotted to each person, as there is a considerable quantity of goods stored on this floor, and which will vary in amount very frequently. The room is well lighted by means of eleven glass windows. The bakehouse is on the under floor, below street level; measures 64 feet x 12 feet; has a concrete and cement floor, and is occupied by twenty men and boys. There is also in the room a 10-horse power engine (which is not even enclosed), a large amount of belting, and a great quantity of trade apparatus and appliances. The oven, which throws out a strong heat, is at the east end of the room, and there are also double gas brackets with twenty-four burners.

The sanitary arrangements are very perfect.

The floors of both workshops are regularly flushed with a hose-pipe, and washed.

There are no appliances to extinguish fire.

The Virginia Tobacco Factory, Charlotte Street.

The workshop measures 50 feet x 52 feet x 15 feet, and is engorged with filthy and greasy matter, from which smells of the most offensive character exude. There are thirty-two male workers, but the place is so overcrowded with trade appliances that there is not even an ordinary free passage for the persons employed. The available space for the workers is absurdly small, and the air is not pure.

There is one small closet for the males and one for the females, both being of very small dimensions, and situated too closely together.

The closet for the girls is also used as a cloakroom, which is exceedingly objectionable.

There is a urinal which is not supplied with water, and is connected by a pipe to a drain. The smells from the urinations and otherwise are most offensive. One of the female workers is employed all day in close proximity to this abomination.

The factory is never washed.

There is no apparatus to extinguish fire.

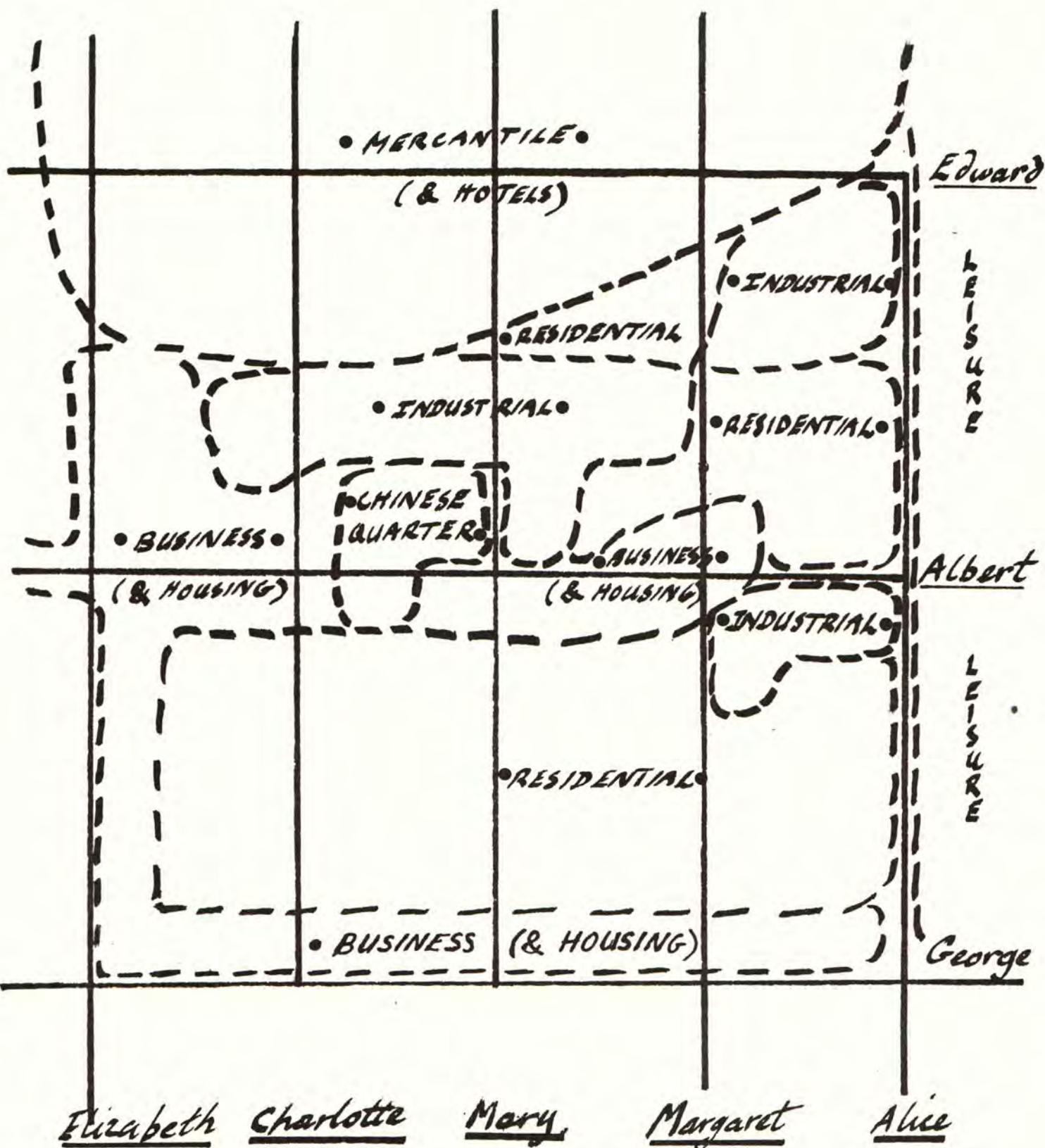
After inspecting 64 establishments in Brisbane and Ipswich, and taking evidence from numerous witnesses, the commissioners reported that many places lacked adequate space, ventilation, closets, sex segregation, safety measures and fire precautions. Though some trades were not investigated and witnesses could not be compelled, it would be difficult to deny the Commission's belief that this evidence fairly represented the working environment at large. Hence the significance of the summary statement that 'Your Commissioners in the course of their inspection became painfully awakened to the general insanitary conditions under which many live and have to work' (QPP 1891, vol.2; cf. Illustration 9).

In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that accidents of various kinds were reported quite regularly in the Brisbane courier. Fires damaged the tobacco factory and Hunter's old block of commercial buildings in Charlotte Street, as well as Fentimans's fruitshop in Edward Street and contractor C.W. Midson's storeroom in Mary Street (17 May p.5, 20 October p.8, 2 November p.4, 27 December p.6). In September the whole row of Chinese shops in Albert Street was seriously impaired (29 September p.5, 19 October p.3). The timely intervention by two constables with buckets of water saved Mrs Sarah Williams boardinghouse from certain destruction, a girl having placed a lighted candle on a chair too close to the bed curtains. Less fortunate was Rachel Thompson, 'a young girl' lodging in the same street, who died from her dress catching fire after she lit a candle and threw the live match on the floor (4 July p.5, 28 May p.5, 28 June p.5). George Watson, a 37 year old employee of Evans, Anderson & Phelan, also contributed to his own death when making alterations to the lift machinery at Leslie & Co.'s warehouse in Edward Street, thereby causing the lift to fall on top of him. Even the demolition of an old building could be hazardous, especially if a four foot snake emerged from the first floor brickwork as happened in Margaret Street. Nor might the roadway be safe, as an Aboriginal named 'King Billy' found when he was run over by a cab in the same street and removed bleeding profusely to hospital (14 February p.5, 15 February p.4, 26 October p.5, 17 January p.5). Though accidents like these were common throughout Brisbane, not to mention mundane death and disease, the detrimental state of the living and working environment in this part of the city was no doubt conducive.

Altogether this evidence indicates that the fabric of life in old Frogs Hollow was in a stage of rapid transition. By the 1880s many of its old houses and shops had deteriorated to such an extent that they were considered uninhabitable. During a decade of colonial development and population expansion, these buildings were commonly adapted for boarding, business and workshop purposes, or replaced by more substantial commercial and industrial complexes. Consequently an area which had previously been characterized by residences, shops and workshops, with a few larger businesses, was not only becoming aligned more closely to the commercial, mercantile and accommodation trade, but also reshaped as a significant industrial sector of the city.

By the late 1880s this urban development spawned an irregular streetscape of structures which varied greatly in age, scale, material, style, function and condition. Hence the haphazard appearance of old Frogs Hollow as depicted not only by contemporary guides such as Garran's, but also in the 1888 balloon's-eye view of Brisbane (see Illustration 6). That this was also an insanitary place is conveyed by its factory chimneys belching smoke - a symbol of industrial progress to many contemporaries but the subject of complaint by the Portmaster to the Brisbane Municipal Council in September 1887 (BHG 1988a, no.122).

At the same time this unregulated urban process produced a spatial pattern of greater concentration for some uses but dispersal for others. In the northwestern corner, mercantile activity continued to spread along Edward Street and down Elizabeth, Charlotte and Mary Streets, interspersed by the customary hotels and boardinghouses. Albert Street retained two of its three hotels, but boardinghouses multiplied along its length and up the hill towards George Street via Charlotte and Mary Streets. The rest of Albert Street as far as Mary Street and the eastern side of Elizabeth Street remained the principal shopping location. Small businesses and workshops proliferated throughout the area, while larger-scale industry consolidated



14 Old Frogs Hollow spatial concentrations 1888:

Note: boundaries are approximate and all were mixed in reality.

its hold in the northeastern blocks bounded by Edward, Alice, Albert and Charlotte Streets. As a result the domestic component was considerably reduced to scattered dwellings and a few patches here and there, mostly along Alice, Margaret, Mary and Charlotte Streets in the southeastern corner, from the hollow uphill to George Street (QPOD 1888 & 1889 cf. 1878-79; see Illustration 14).

That these developments also affected the social structure of old Frogs Hollow goes without saying. But since no census returns are available, we are forced to rely mainly on street directories for details regarding residence, occupation, ethnicity and gender (see Fisher 1988a). As directories generally list the occupations of householders or businesses of proprietors without distinguishing other inmates or diverse uses of the premises concerned, a complete classification table would be fallacious for such an area. Nevertheless some general observations may be made regarding residence and occupation if the likely businesses without dwellings are eliminated from the tally.

About 50 of the 235 possible households listed in the 1888-89 directories were female-headed. Five of these women were simply named and one was titled 'Miss', but the rest were 'Mrs'. Of the latter, 21 were also given occupations:

- 1 Publicans 2
- 2 Boardinghouse keepers 9
- 3 Dressmakers (plus office cleaner & laundress) 3
- 4 Fruiterers 3
- 5 Grocer 1
- 6 Storekeeper (plus cooper) 1
- 7 waxflower maker 1
- 8 Music teacher 1

For likely male-headed households the occupations may be grouped into broad categories with very approximate numbers:

- 1 Publicans & boardinghouse keepers 30
- 2 Purveyors (storekeepers, grocers, butchers, fruiterers, cooks, confectioners, oystersaloon keepers, waiters, tobacconists) 35
- 3 Woodworkers (carpenters, cabinetmakers, painters, signwriters, upholsterers) 20
- 4 Clothing makers (tailors, bootmakers) 20
- 5 Craftworkers (jewellers, engravers, woodcarvers, coopers, basketmakers, stonemasons) 20
- 6 Metal workers (boilmakers, blacksmiths, tinsmiths) 20
- 7 Transport workers (proprietors, carriers, drivers, grooms, mariners) 20
- 8 Labourers (labourers, wharf labourers, storemen) 20
- 9 Others (hawkers, billposter, salesman, accountant, etc.) 10

These occupations are hardly unusual for inner city areas, but the emphases are stronger here. Most noticeable for a Brisbane area is the absence of white-collar or elite residents, except for a sprinkling uphill near George Street, and the preponderance of female-headed households, boardinghouse keepers, skilled workers and shopkeepers, in keeping with the economic role of the area.

Another social feature of old Frogs Hollow was its ethnic mix. Apart from some of the larger commercial concerns noted already from the Aldine

history, a further scan of street directories shows a sizeable minority of business names which were European and/or Jewish in origin including: Philip Cohen, bootmaker; Isaac Abrahams, Tailor; J.W. Heckleman, tinsmith; Fritz Muson, cabinetmaker; August Kosvitz, jeweller; Henry Heerschen, woodturner; Solomon Rosenthal, tailor; Henry Weigal, basketmaker; Aronson Rosenthal, tailor. Some were resident, while others merely worked or retailed at their premises. Like their more commercial brethren, these skilled workers mostly appeared on the scene during the 1880s, but they clustered south of the mercantile sector, around the Elizabeth and Albert Street intersection. Little wonder that the Deutscher Club operated on the west side of Elizabeth Street, while the new Jewish Synagogue appeared in upper Margaret Street in 1886 (BHG 1988a, no.119; see Illustration 10).

More central to the area, however, and far more conspicuous at the time were the Chinese, who also appeared in larger numbers during the decade. The 1888 and 1889 directories list 29 different names, including 19 for 1888, and other names appear in the newspapers. As these inhabitants had a reputation for accommodating their countrymen, and two were boardinghouse keepers, the turnover of Chinese was evidently high. Several were listed as cooks, fruiterers, hawkers or drapers, but the rest were storekeepers or grocers. Though a few were scattered around the periphery, they mostly lived along Albert Street, particularly on the north side in a row of nine shop-houses under one roof between Charlotte and Mary Streets ('the Nine Holes') and around the corner. This was Brisbane's Chinatown in the 1880s (QPOD 1888 & 1889 cf. 1878-79; see Illustrations 9, 12, 14).

Altogether these households, including lodgings, boardinghouses and work/shop/houses, supplied labour locally; but the urban trend was towards segregation of residence from workplace, so that the lesser and more transient folk were being left to inhabit the hollow. At the same time the inroads of trade and industry, combined with the proportional decline of housing stock and the detrimental character of the area, ensured that the greater part of the workforce was drawn from outside. In 1891 various workers testified to the commissioners that they travelled there from suburbs around Brisbane, generally by foot, though horsedrawn buses and trams as well as ferry services from Kangaroo Point and South Brisbane could be used on occasions. Moreover their evidence as a whole reveals just how dependent the shops, factories and workshops were upon the cheap labour of young employees, female as well as male, some apprenticed but most not, from an early age of 11 to 13 in many cases. Like adult employees, they worked for a minimum of nine hours a day plus Saturday mornings, and often more, in crowded and unhealthy surroundings. But their pay was particularly low, their education poor and their tenure uncertain. On Saturday and Sunday nights the workers descended upon the gaslit town in droves, seeking diversion centred upon Queen Street. On holidays they frolicked particularly by the riverside where the Queen's Park and Botanic Gardens were the principal venue for sports of all kinds, including cricket, football, swimming and boating, or simply promenading and socialising (see Boomerang 26 November 1887, p.8; Brisbane courier 23 February 1887, p.6). There was consequently, a continual flow of revellers, workers and sojourners in, through and around the area.

Because of its strategic location between the town and the river/gardens along one axis and the George and Eagle Street precincts on the other, as well as its enhanced social, commercial and industrial role, old Frogs Hollow was by no means a ghetto. Nevertheless it constituted a distinctive enclave - an amalgam of topographical, functional, environmental and social characteristics which distinguished this from other areas of Brisbane. Such

was the pace of change on all levels, that this place was in a state of flux. But whether it was also becoming a den of iniquity remains to be seen.

Even a superficial reading of the Brisbane courier shows that disorder of all kinds was rife in old Frogs Hollow. In a single year the police court handled hundreds of cases of obscene language, disorderly conduct, and riotous behaviour. Males and females were equally charged time and time again, including 'poor old Dan Collins', aged only 47 but with 42 previous appearances, whose drunken shouting attracted a crowd in Edward Street, and Margaret Burke, with 30 convictions, who did likewise in Albert Street. Collins received the usual sentence of £2 or 48 hours imprisonment for more than a first offence from an exasperated magistrate, but Burke was gaoled for three months with hard labour (26 April p.5, 31 May p.5). Mary Ann Sullivan, a 30 years old woman 'of dissipated appearance', possibly achieved two records for her age - three hours of obscene language on a Sunday, partly in her own house within hearing of passers-by and partly in Margaret Street, and 72 convictions for similar offences by October (12 June p.7, 10 August p.3, 9 October p.3). Vagrancy was also common before the law though some were unfortunate sojourners rather than habitual offenders. Martin Brennan of Albert Street, aged 24, had been drinking heavily for a month after being discharged from his ship, so that the magistrate gave him a week to sober up (24 October p.3). With a cheque dishonoured and financial ruin staring him in the face, George B. Stephens, a 40 years old squatting and mining investor boarding at the Metropolitan Hotel in Edward Street, purchased a flask of brandy at the bar, went quietly upstairs to his room, donned his might clothes, and shot himself through the right temple in bed (13 July p.5, 24 July p.5). Such cases were hardly unusual in Brisbane at this time, but most common in old Frogs Hollow.

Of all the minor offences, however, drunkenness was most common, either on its own or in conjunction with other charges. Drunkards were encountered at every turn in this locality, whether males, like the sailor found bleeding outside the Prince of Wales Hotel (23 July p.4), or females such as the case described in a letter to the editor of the Courier:

Two or three days ago, off Charlotte-street, I saw a woman lying upon the ground, exposed to the full blaze of the hot sun, and several people gazing at her. I went for a policeman, and together we got the woman up. She fell again when attempting to walk. Another chance was given to her; but as it was not safe for the woman to be out in the street in that state, she was taken again to the lockup. She is a fine woman of about 30 years of age. Her husband left her some time ago and in her trouble she took to the drink and the streets. Four children are placed in the orphanage (18 April p.7).

Whatever the need for alcohol, there was no shortage of supply locally. The Edward Street bars were well patronised by males and females alike (6 June p.5), there were several more hotels in Albert Street or up George Street, and sly grog was plentiful anyway. In Margaret Street, Mrs Maria Naylor sold bottles of beer to Fanny Barber, who supplied two guests off the street; they happened to be constables, hence a fine of £15 plus court costs. Mrs Sarah Williams, whose boarding house in Albert Street was described in court a 'nothing less than a drinking shop', was not only fined likewise but had 27 bottles of beer confiscated by the revenue officer. In addition to boardinghouse and brothel keepers, oystersaloon proprietors like John Nicholas of Albert Street also catered for thirsty customers (16 August p.3).

As there was plenty of scope in such a locality for stealing, the Courier also recorded many instances of larcency. Some were petty thefts of unattended money, as in the case of a 17 year old suspected of taking three £1 notes and silver from the third floor quarters of a carpenter living on the job at Harper's new warehouse (23 March p.3). Several thefts involved clothing which could be readily resold on Albert Street, whether stolen from a dressing-room of the Theatre Royal in Elizabeth Street or a boardinghouse in Charlotte Street (24 April p.5, 7 May p.3). Others were more serious cases of stealing from the person. An 'old man' named John Wright, who admitted to drinking 'pretty freely' that morning, was dragged to the ground and robbed of nineteen shillings by Norman Duncan (23) and James Slattery (21); this might have been justice if he was the same John Wright who had stolen the watch and chain of a drunken cook sleeping on a boardinghouse form (23 March p.3, 31 July p.7). Women were also caught, including Minnie Galvin, with 17 previous convictions, who was imprisoned for stealing a purse from Ah Fan in Albert Street (22 June p.3). However, males were more involved in theft with violence. Michael O'Brien was accused of assaulting Otto Swannell in Margaret Street, to relieve the drunken miner of his watch, chain, jubilee medal, purse, ticket to Townsville and gold studs, and doing likewise to Thomas Olsen, a seaman, only a fortnight later (15 May p.6, 1 June p.6, 16 June p.3). That theft had become a fact of life is also indicated by the careers of Edward Kennedy and Thomas Brown alias Cockney. Having slipped into a billposter's Mary Street office while he was out the back, they lifted his coat and vest, but were sighted in a doorway further down the street rifling the pockets for his watch, chain and guineas. Both culprits were sentenced to three years imprisonment, Kennedy having been in and out of goal since 1882, while Brown, with 13 recent convictions, was characterized as 'a persistent thief and vagabond, able-bodied but too lazy to work, and who was constantly in gaol for some offence or other' (30 March p.3 cf. 13 January p.3, 21 February p.5). Thus the incidence of theft was high in old Frogs Hollow, but hardly organized or spectacular in operation. Moreover the victims were mostly outsiders who were easy prey, especially when wandering drunk along the sidestreets.

Other cases of violence were not necessarily the preliminary to theft and were perpetrated against locals as well as outsiders by males and females alike. While walking to the ferry in Alice Street at an early hour a man was almost garrotted by four assailants who were interrupted by two timely pedestrians (12 April p.5). At the ferryhouse one Saturday midnight, Daniel and Joseph Ede knocked a Kangaroo Point fireman to the ground, breaking his leg and assaulting him again, while claiming to an interloper and the police that the drunken 'cow' had insulted them and broken Daniel's glasses (26 June p.6). Opposite the Metropolitan Hotel on a Tuesday afternoon, some seafaring men were having a dispute when a young fellow named Thomas Watson alias Patterson came up and began quarrelling; drawing his penknife he stabbed a young seaman four times (27 September p.3). However, these were isolated assaults against outsiders, compared with the incidence of violence amongst locals themselves. Where men were concerned the opposite sex was the main issue before the courts, whether wives or prostitutes. Thomas Paul, a boardinghouse proprietor of Mary Street, was acquitted of getting the better of William Lloyd after coming home one night and finding the lodger with his wife, whose fidelity was suspect (31 July p.7). By far the greatest number of reported cases involved women

themselves, who used any weapon at hand to settle the score. Sometimes this was against men, as in the case of 20 years old Sarah McGuiness who gave George Thompson more than he bargained for in Margaret Street, hitting him in the mouth and then seriously wounding him to the bone over his right eye with some stones off the road (28 August p.3). But most personal altercations were between women and under the influence of alcohol. Many were as disconcerting as the case of Louisa Baldwin, with 23 convictions to her credit, who went into Mrs Ellen Meyers house in Albert Street, abused her when asked to leave, floored her with her fist and then threw a cup which knocked her unconscious (15 May p.6). Other assailants did more damage, however unpremeditated, especially Bridget Betts who attacked Mrs Catherine Knight, 'a very old woman' aged only 45, at the Margaret Street boardinghouse run by Mrs Kate Nelson with her ferryman husband Peter and daughter Josephine. The Nelsons and others testified that following a Tuesday morning drinking bout the women quarrelled over Betts' suggestion of marriage to Knight's son; 'then Mrs. Betts again caught hold of Mrs. Knight and threw her across towards the kitchen door ... and kicked her out; she fell down two steps upon a brick outside the door, and afterwards the prisoner came out and kicked her; ... the prisoner also thumped Mrs. Knight in the face with her fist; she then went down to get a dress hanging upon the fence and when returning she again kicked and thumped her in the face; prisoner then went into the house next door'. After lying insensible on the ground for three quarters of an hour the victim crawled inside, but was found dead next morning from a severe rupture of the liver. As this could have been caused by the brick rather than a kick, Betts was merely sentenced to ten years penal servitude, being described by the police inspector as 'a disorderly character and a prostitute, and had been sent to gaol for seven years for larcency from the person' (16 September p.5, 17 September p.6, 20 November p.3).

In many instances these offences were associated with prostitution. The court cases reported in the Brisbane courier speak for themselves. By April 1888, Sarah Mattie aged 26 was well known as 'an old offender', having been sentenced on various occasions for drunkenness, disorderly conduct and riotous behaviour in Albert Street. Now facing a vagrancy charge, she meekly pleaded guilty before the police magistrate:

Mr. Pinnock: "Perhaps this girl may be taken in somewhere".

Sub-Inspector Durham: "Your Worship, I got this girl taken into the Salvation Army Home, and she made promises, but she was back in Albert-street before twenty four hours were up. She has no home; even the Chinamen won't harbour her. I think we have done all we can for her".

Mr. Pinnock: "She is quite a young girl".

Mr. Durham: "She is married, but her husband has left her; she has a child, but it was taken from her".

Mr. Pinnock: "Well we can't send her to the Salvation Army again, and yet if I put her in gaol that will be sending her to utter destruction".

Mattie was sentenced to one months imprisonment for vagrancy, followed in June by three months with hard labour for riotous behaviour in Albert Street once again. Yet she bounced back by September, to be sentenced once more, for destroying six panes of glass in a Chinaman's shop (17 February p.6, 21 February p.3, 24 March p.3, 9 April p.4, 7 June p.3, 20 September p.7).

More incorrigible was Grace McMullen, 'a woman of bad repute' aged 25 to 29 years, who added theft and violence to a string of the more mundane offences. At the beginning of the year she was associated in a fracas with

Thomas Brown alias Cockney and other Albert Street notables. In February she was eventually acquitted of stealing fifteen shillings from Bob, a South Sea Islander, who had accompanied her to Tommy Ah Chong's shop-house in Albert/Mary Street, 'and while in a bedroom he took off his trousers and put them on a box and the light was blown-out'. Like other unruly women, McMullen was ultimately sentenced to three months imprisonment, but was back in Albert Street by October when she was charged with cutting Bella Montefiore about the head with a stone, each accusing the other of provocation. In the following month she quarrelled with 'a tall and powerful American Black' named Charles or Martin Williams and was kicked unconscious in a laneway leading to Mary Street from the Chinese shops and taken to hospital in a critical condition. The evidence was rather contradictory again - she claiming that he had become angry when she refused his advances, while he stated that she had called him into the house and put her hand in his pocket - but the court sentenced Williams to six months imprisonment as he had also caused a great stir in Albert Street and broken a constable's finger in violently resisting arrest. Undaunted by this episode, McMullen was in the thick of a bawdyhouse fracas in Albert Street less than a fortnight later (13 January p.3, 13 February p.5, 14 February p.3, 21 February p.3, 6 March p.6, 9 March p.9, 2 June p.6, 15 June p.3, 24 October p.3, 17 November p.3, 24 November p.3, 24 November p.5, 28 November p.5, 30 November p.6).

Being a prostitute meant risking violence from other persons involved in the business: one's customers, as in the case of 'a young girl' named Madeleine Cromwell, 'who appeared as if she had taken an active part in a prize fight' after quarrelling with a young man in Edward Street; one's pimp, as Polly Walker found when she was induced to leave comfortable house by John P. McDermott, a young man who reportedly lived off such women, and was knocked down and kicked in the yard of a Margaret Street house; and one's competitors, as occurred in the altercation between Grace McMullen and Bella Montefiore (9 April p.5, 31 August p.3, 24 October p.3). In the last case, McMullen's witness was Lizzie Hopkins who had been severely assaulted herself by 28 years old Thomas Kelly, and then involved in a brothel row with 21 year old Blanche Craven whose head was cut severely, ostensibly from falling on a broken jar (10 April p.3, 23 August p.5). There was a similar disturbance on the Saturday night before Christmas when May or Mary Anderson was arrested for cutting Annie L'Estrange about the neck and head. Anderson, 'a young Scotch girl' aged 21 with only 3 previous convictions, had been charged in June with riotous behaviour in Albert Street and sent to the Salvation Army Home. A month later she was sentenced to six months imprisonment for the larcency of £26, seven ship discharges and some totaliser tickets from the person of Alf. Horme, a cook and steward. He just happened to be sitting before Anderson in the bedroom off one of the Chinese shops in Albert/Mary Street when she snatched his purse from a vestpocket and threw it over the partition to two Chinese (24 December p.4, 18 June p.3, 17 July p.5, 18 July p.3, 31 July p.7). Customers might not only seek legal redress but also become quite nasty when 'rolled' by women, as occurred to Bella Montefiore, aged 26, who made the mistake of drinking with Angelo Togleane or Fogleane and inviting him home to Margaret Street. His version of the tete-a-tete was that, on finding £11 missing, he attempted a body search; after she fell, striking her head on the chimney, he ran to inform the police of the theft. But her story, corroborated by a colleague was that after giving her some money, he knocked it from her hands; when she resisted he grabbed a tomahawk and struck her over the head with the blunt end. Despite the doctor's statement that the scalp wound could have been caused otherwise, the Swiss was fined £10, though somewhat hesitantly, and allowed time to pay (14 March p.6, 17 March p.7, 4 August

p.6, 7 August p.6, 24 October p.3). Such brothel cases were quite common, and the clients were often outsiders in more ways than one.

Altogether this evidence shows that prostitution and associated ills were rampant in old Frogs Hollow. Drunkenness, theft, disorder and violence were endemic, while death without timely medical attention was also reported occasionally, as well as a charge of abortion against 'Professor' George Washington Gibson, the well-known medical herbalist resident at the corner of George and Charlotte Streets (31 May p.5, 28 September p.3, 4 August p.6, 24 August p.3, 31 August p.3, 17 October p.3, BHG 1987a p.235). Brothel-keepers, pimps and associates sometimes appear, though hardly as regularly as the women themselves, who were quite visible in Brisbane according to Mary McConachie, a Scottish stonemason's wife, in 1886:

Vice flaunts itself in gaudy colours here. A common street girl's attire when out of doors is ruby velvet trimmed with cream lace, or perhaps peacock blue satin with cream lace, black satin or velvet with gold lace, white or cream silk, white hats with long drooping white feathers, and abundance of jewellery, of every description. When I first landed here I thought there was a great many grandes here, but thought their taste in dress rather 'loud'. I little suspected what they were for there are some very handsome and ladylike girls amongst them (JOL MS OM75-91).

Edward Street, with its string of hotels, was reputedly 'paraded by fallen women on their way to the public-houses, accompanied by men of the lowest class' (6 June p.5), as were the Botanic Gardens which Henry Campey, an interstate mill manager and engineer, visited at this time:

Having time on my hands before proceeding to Sydney, I had a walk in the Brisbane Gardens; being afternoon, it was this time that I saw what is in most large towns, but I do not think to such a state of youth as was to be seen in the gardens, viz. the depravity of young women and girls (JOL MS 70-38/2).

They were even known to seek custom at the nearby museum on William Street! (Mather 1986, p.106).

What proportion of these were Frogs Hollow women is unclear, but the local marketplace was Albert Street while the major brothels were in Margaret Street. It was the latter substandard quarters rather than moral implications which concerned Dr Bancroft on one of his inspections. Mrs Maria Naylor's premises comprised two wooden houses in front, one occupied by herself and the other by two prostitutes, behind which were 'two rows of brick and iron buildings of one story, each divided into many small rooms', intended as dwellings for prostitutes. These were ill ventilated, insanitary and damp from recent flooding, as were the premises of Mrs Mary O'Brien:

Two houses of wood. The flood water reached to the eaves of the verandah. Rooms yet damp. A back shed of slabs has been lined with boards. All the premises are used as dwelling for prostitutes, several of whom then in the rooms exhibited no sign of illness by rise of temperature.

The slab place being low and the wood floor lying on the earth I consider insanitary and unfit to be used as a dwelling or otherwise occupied (2 April 1890).

This accommodation in Margaret Street was obviously just as pernicious as much of the local building stock (see Illustration 10).

The other quarters investigated by Bancroft were occupied by the Chinese. In Albert Street next to the Royal Exchange Hotel, the wooden house used by Yuen Sing Tai & Co. was filthy, decayed and sodden. In Mary Street, four brick shops had been cheaply constructed 'with fetid abominable cellars underneath more or less used as sleeping places'. All were condemned as insanitary (10 April 1888). The row of shop-houses in Albert Street were somewhat better and described more particularly:

Regarding the shops and dwellings on the street-level, little exception need be taken.

The subdivision and arrangement of the sleeping and cooking rooms and the storage of merchandise and food, are in keeping with all Chinese usages: to us they look crowded but the spaces all open into each other and are thereby ventilated and are not more insanitary than the state of things found in many small cottages of Europeans.

There is a story below the street in which stand the wooden piles that support the shops above. It opens through doorways in the brick wall with the yard behind, which is nearly on the same level. This under space is more or less subdivided and used for lumber, to work in and when a number of men come in from the gardens, becomes sleeping-room for them, so I think, from mats and tressels there piled up.

It was this earthen and ill-drained level which was a breeding-ground for disease, as well as the yard with its earth closets, fowlhouse, sleeping shed and cooking places, not to mention much offal and burrowing rats (4 December 1889; cf. Illustrations 9, 12, 14).

The reports by Bancroft and others show that these quarters were crowded with Chinese residents and visitors, despite the ugly rioting and a serious fire in 1888. They were also a principal resort for opium and gambling; as Bancroft stated, 'The rooms on the level of the street are subdivided in the usual Chinese fashion into apartments for sleeping, provided with opium-smoking lamps and appliances, store-rooms, fan-tan rooms &c' (6 October 1891); and most Chinese were believed to indulge, even to the extent of death in the case of Get Tong, an opium dealer of Mary Street (BC 17 April, p.3). What is less obvious is the degree of patronage by Europeans, whether locals or outsiders of Old Frogs Hollow. The evidence indicates, however, that the Chinese welcomed visitors, even newspaper boys who testified to the factory commissioners that a good few of their number went to fan-tan on Saturday and Sunday nights (QPP 1891, vol.2). They also provided accommodation for prostitutes such as Sarah Mattie, Grace McMullen and Mary Anderson, and had a reputation for being kinder to those women. Though Europeans generally preferred alcohol to opium and various forms of gambling to fan-tan or pak-a-pu, some indulged in the latter pursuits, judging by the number of 28 out of 67 arrests in a police raid upon four of the houses in Albert street (Queenslander 6 June 1891, p.1063). In this regard William Lane's assessment of the clientele is evidently quite accurate, as exaggeration would have aided his cause:

There are no public joints in Brisbane, or rather no places relying solely on the patronage of opium smokers. Several Albert-street shops sell the drug either in the half-crown boxes or in 1s. or 1s. 6d. doses like doll's dinner services, and they throw in the use of a bedstead and pipe in a joint which is occupied, as all the rooms are,

by a crowd of lodgers. But the bulk of the smoking is done by the lodgers and the lodgers' friends in lodgers' rooms; or out at the market gardens. Nor are there many white people who smoke here, not nearly so many as smoke in country towns or on mining fields. The danger of exposure here is so great and the consequences of ostracism from all recognised society so certain. Even the fallen women don't indulge in opium-smoking to any alarming extent. They are mostly new chums and liquor-drinkers and one vice generally preserves from the other. A few of the larrikins and wild young fellows occasionally take a pipe full, but here in Brisbane they are held back from downfall by the comparative intensity of the anti-Chinese feeling (Boomerang 21 January p.11).

Despite the prejudicial reaction and emotive language of anti-Chinese campaigners, there is little reason to doubt what William Lane, or even John Potts, actually saw:

The hour was near twelve, and the night dark and cloudy, when two Sanitary Inspectors, like guardian angels, escorted me to Albert Street. Yuen Sing Tai's store, was the first we entered. The front shop was fairly pleasant, but behind a nest of yellow faces met our gaze, slumbering in dazy stupidity, amid a cloud of opium smoke. The fumes had permeated the very walls, and rendered intensely sick the atmosphere. The walls were grimy, the rooms low and small, being only about 6 ft. square, and containing no less than 14 mongols.

We ascended a narrow, steep stairway, when a boss Chink said, "You no go da, no Chinee sleepie upee da". Step by step we ascended into pitch darkness, when we halted against the roof and struck a light. To our dismay there were 7 beds, containing 14 yellow bedfellows against that iron roof. We peeped into a dozen more such places, until sick and disgusted. In one small kennel was a slumbering son from the flowery land, steeped in opium fumes, lying unconsciously among streaks of oil fat bacon, dried fish, and half rotten fruit. Some sleeping rooms were only 3 ft high. Young girls, insensible with narcotics and surrounded with several celestials, lay still like death. We had some trouble in sliding back a door as a mongol voice from within was crying - something like "chic, chic, chic, checka, ra too ah". Upon opening this door, we saw the partial nude figure of a Chinaman sitting on his bunk, and his pigtail pate was just emerging through the top of his shirt. We asked his name, when his mistress, who was partly covered with rags, said it was Ah Kim, and that she would soon give us his address if we didn't clear (Potts 1888, p.28 cf. Illustration 16).

Though the Chinese had important links with local society, it is not difficult to understand why rioting against them on Saturday 5 May originated in old Frogs Hollow (see chs 3 & 13). In addition to racial and election tension as a general precondition, with a shop dispute in Albert Street as the catalyst, the physical and social flux of the area provided an environment conducive to violent reaction. Moreover a volatile human element was already at hand in the form of the larrikin. Despite the assertion by Gilbert Parker, a visiting Canadian journalist in early 1889, that larrikins did not exist as a class in Brisbane, these gentlemen were the talk of the town in 1888. According to the Courier on Christmas eve, 'The larrikin loves Saturday night, and in all the glory of high heels - of the French pattern - bell-bottomed pants, and bobtailed coat, decked with many buttons, he props himself against hotel walls or friendly lamp posts and bespatters the footways with his copious expectoration' (24 December p.5). In reality, however, the newspaper reports show that larrikins were

basically youthful aggressors who performed all manner of anti-social acts-hassling citizens, using obscene language, disrupting Salvation Army services, assaulting police, violating property and attacking Chinese. Moreover they generally acted in concert; hence the claim by Daniel Ede of the ferryhouse fireman affray, that 'he had been set upon by a gang of Kangaroo Point larrikins' (26 June p.6).

That old Frogs Hollow was a haunt of divers larrikins was recognized by contemporaries, including a roving reporter from the Brisbane courier in 1887:

As I was walking down Albert-street six nights ago with detective Jessop, half a dozen lads from 10 to 14 years were lounging in the door of a Chinese gambling den. Two older youths, dressed in braid-trimmed cutaway black coats, bell-bottomed tweed trousers, high heeled boots, and slouched felt hats joined them. "There you have the Brisbane larrikin at all his stages. The smallest boy has just taken a taste for the streets. He plays truant, from home and from school, and is to be seen at all hours of the day or night loafing around. There is a charm for chaps like him in a life free from control. The older boys are confirmed street Arabs. They have parents and homes but seldom paid them a visit. So long as they have their freedom they are content with a tank or a boiler for a bed, and they thieve for pocket money. The two swell cads who have just joined them are full-blown larrikins. They have graduated in vice, from pilfering downwards, and are now living as pensioners on the infamy of girls of the town" (7 October p.5).

Consequently there was no shortage of 'larrikins and loafers', as well as curious bystanders on that fateful Saturday night when rioting began at the store next to the Royal Exchange Hotel and spread to other Chinese quarters. According to the Courier, 'The most active part of the crowd consisted of about fifty, the majority of whom were youths of a very low type, apparently between the ages of 14 and 18 years' (7 May p.3 cf. 11 May p.3, 14 May p.4, 15 May p.5, 31 May p.6). As three of those implicated in larcency were 12, 13 and 14 years respectively, the mob evidently included all of those categories of larrikins distinguished by Detective Jessop - the truant lads, the street Arabs and the full-blown larrikins. Though the rioting was attributed to larrikinism, the Courier also stated that action began with 'a large crowd of the roughs who usually congregate in Albert-street', and 'the bullies of Albert-street' were referred to in a subsequent episode' (7 May p.4, 16 August p.3). Larrikinism in all of its manifestations was rife in old Frogs Hollow, but it was other, overlapping elements of 'the criminal class' - drunkards, prostitutes, thieves and assailants - who ordinarily stole the limelight.

Such was the volume of disorder and adverse publicity that civil society could hardly ignore the problem overall. According to one estimate, 50 per cent of all cases tried at the police court emanated from the area (25 September p.5). After a particularly notorious case, one of the magistrates referred to what had taken place in or near the brothels lately - 'a murder, a sudden death, and other occurrences - and said he wished these beastly places could be done away with', the brothelkeepers being to blame (2 October p.6). More specifically the mayor inquired of the police commissioner whether moves could be made against brothels in the neighbourhood of Albert Street, considering the recent complaints (24 March p.5). Furthermore the correspondent who protested about the fallen women and their low class companions parading themselves in Edward Street urged

legal prosecution against publicans for making such people beastly drunk (6 June p.5). And 'Vigilant' proposed energetic action against houses of ill-fame and sly grog sellers in the Albert street vicinity (25 September p.5).

For their part the authorities did what they could to suppress disorder by means of police patrols, sly grog prosecutions, gambling raids and the whole machinery of punitive justice. That they really lacked the means is indicated by the police commissioner's response to the mayor - 'that it would be found extremely difficult to obtain all the proof that was necessary to obtain convictions against the keeping of these houses (24 March p.5). As a result the police concentrated upon the individuals concerned, rather than the operators, charging them time and time again for mundane offences against order and propriety according to the letter of the law.

At the same time, charitable rescue work for women was carried out particularly by the Salvation Army home at Paddington, the Industrial Home at Normanby and then the Magdalene Asylum at Wooloowin, and for drunkards there was much talk of establishing an inebriety home apart from the reception house. The City Mission, with its hall in Lower Charlotte Street, conducted services and evening classes, as well as doing 'good work among the sick, poor and careless of the city', while the Blue Ribbon Society held the following kind of meeting on Sunday nights at the Albert Street corner before proceeding to the mission hall:

Mr. J.A. Clark conducted the meetings, and spoke to a large gathering assembled in the open-air from the words, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup," &c. The meeting in the hall commenced with singing, prayer, and a scripture lesson read by the chairman. Suitable addresses were delivered by Mr. Hooper and Mrs. J.A. Clark. Mrs. Hooper sang "Where is my wandering boy to-night", the choir and the congregation joining the chorus. The meeting closed with singing and prayer. Nineteen persons signed the pledge and put on the ribbon. The workers' prayer meeting was afterwards held (3 July 1888 p.5 cf. 16 June p.5, 3 July p.5, 31 October p.8).

Though all was not lost individually, by and large the 'criminal class' refused to turn over a new leaf. In fact they resisted undue interference in their way of life, by closing ranks and defending themselves as best they could, especially against overly zealous prosecution by police. Several cases will suffice.

James Lampey, aged 23, had been in and out of court on various charges, including disorderly conduct, vagrancy and larceny, before taking part in a drunken row at Mary Street brothel on a Sunday morning. According to Constable King:

He heard a number of young men and women using very obscene language, so he went in and found everything in a state of confusion. He attempted to arrest a young man named James Lampey and was very roughly handled, but he stuck to his man and succeeded in taking him to the watchhouse.

While arresting 'the Larrikin Lampey', Constable King was also assaulted by a young Irish girl called Mary Honan, who threw stones and bottles. In the general melee he was struck in several places and Lampey's head was cut open. Honan already had 40 convictions to her name, while Lampey was found

to possess £9 15s. for which he could not give a satisfactory account (23 July pp.4-5, 25 July p.5).

Mary Honan, with Grace McMullen, 'a well-known pair', featured in 'a brutal assault' on Constable Kiernan one day at noon:

While arresting a man named Foley for disorderly conduct in Albert-street he was set upon by three women and two men, who endeavoured to rescue the prisoner, and in doing so kicked and struck the constable in a savage manner. Word having been conveyed to the barracks, several constables were sent down to the assistance of their comrade. Kiernan, who was very much bruised and cut about the face, was also lame from kicks he received, and required medical attention.

James Foley (21) and Lizzie Keane (23) pleaded guilty to charges, while Charles Fischer (30), John Hazeldine (20), Grace McMullen and Mary Honan maintained their innocence. Though a barman in the Oriental Hotel deposed that the two women only pushed the constable and pulled the prisoner, both were sentenced for attempting to rescue Foley, while Honan was sentenced concurrently for a breach of the Contagious Diseases Act (28 November p.5, 29 November p.6, 30 November p.6).

In these instances the police were simply performing their duty by all accounts, but there was a greater element of doubt in the case of John Nicholas, an oyster-saloon keeper who accused Senior-constable Quinn of assault in Albert Street. Nicholas claimed to have merely delivered a ham to Mrs Sarah Williams' establishment, and have been sitting down there with three men when two constables ordered them out. On doing so he was hit over the head, cut on the eye and 'kicked from the footpath to the road' before being stopped, knocked down and kicked, all without end provocation. The second assault was corroborated by a local oyster opener, a groom and a fellow saloon keeper, as well as a third constable on the Albert Street beat. On the other hand Constable Clulow, who had accompanied Quinn, testified that Nicholas had fallen over a drunken woman in the doorway and then threatened revenge, so that when Quinn shoved him he fell over the gutter, but was not kicked; Mounted-constable Philip Ahearn, who was passing by at the time, did not see any sign of assault; Dr Grant Furley stated that Nicholas had only a small scratch on his eye and a recurrent bladder problem to show for his trouble; and none of the witnesses thought he had been harmed at the house. In addition to the contradictory evidence on all sides, it seemed that Nicholas was the worse for drinking with four men and three women, was involved in sly grog selling himself, was consorting with prostitutes, and was doing his best to disgrace Quinn, even to the extent of obtaining a police inquiry. It was also suggested that his police witness had a grudge against Quinn and associated with the bullies of Albert Street. As a result the magistrates dismissed the charge (16 August p.3, 23 August p.3 cf. 6 June p.3).

In the cause celebre of 1888, involving parliamentary debate as well as court appearances and a police report to the government, there was little doubt that a constable went well beyond the call of duty. The principals were 'a young girl' named Kate Walker, her companion Lizzie Woods and their brothelkeeper Mrs Mary O'Brien of Margaret Street, versus police constable Brooks and officialdom itself. The best account was given in the Legislative Assembly by the eminent jurist and politician of the day, Sir Samuel Griffith:

The first fact that was quite certain is, that one night this constable, being in plain clothes - and therefore, not on duty ... - in Albert-street, took the woman from her bedroom to the lockup, and handed her over to the sergeant of police in charge of the lockup, making a charge against her of using obscene language. She was let out almost immediately afterwards, and no charge was preferred against her then. About a fortnight afterwards a summons was issued against the same woman, at the instance of this constable, for making use of obscene language. When the case came on to be heard, the constable swore that he was going down Albert-street when the woman accosted him, using very bad language, and then ran away across the street; that he followed her, for the purpose of arresting her, into her bedroom, and took her thence to the lockup. He called two witnesses who were passing down the other side of the street at the time, who said they heard the woman make use of obscene language ... In answer to that charge it was sworn by the sergeant at the police court, that on the occasion of the woman's arrest, immediately after her arrival at the station, she made a statement to him to this effect: that she had spoken to the constable at the corner of the street, that he had asked for another woman; that she had said to him "She has gone to the pley; will you come home with me?" that they went into the house, and he was in the room with her; that subsequently a disturbance arose between them, and he demanded some money from her; and that on refusing to give it, he said he would take her to the lockup, which he at once proceeded to do. That story she told to the sergeant at the lockup, having no opportunity of speaking to anyone from the time the event happened until that moment. She swore in the box that the same thing had happened. The sergeant also stated that when the girl was locked up she showed marks of violence on her neck. He further said, that while she was locked up, and before she had time to communicate with anyone, another girl came to the lockup and complained of the conduct of the constable in bringing the girl to the lockup, stating she was in a room next to the first girl's bedroom, that hearing a disturbance she broke open the door, when she saw the constable struggling with the girl, and the constable took her away to the lockup. That was corroborated by another woman - of a very bad character, it is true. It was certain that the story could not have been concocted between the two women ... and yet they both told precisely the same story. Whether the obscene language was used or not is, I think, a very subsidiary matter. But the use of that obscene language had nothing to do with taking the girl to the lockup. That was done in consequence of the quarrel that occurred in the house, and the constable endeavoured to screen himself for his misconduct by bringing a charge of bad language against the girl (QPD, vol.55, 1988, pp.839-40 cf. p.661).

When fining Walker for obscene language, one of the police magistrates made it clear that he preferred the word of a constable and two respectable witnesses to that of a brothelkeeper and two prostitutes. Yet he also stated that if the rest of their story were true, the constable should be dismissed (12 October p.6). In the end the government had Brooks transferred far away to Normanton (24 October p.5). Even the criminal class could, with some effort, make itself heard when justice was at stake.

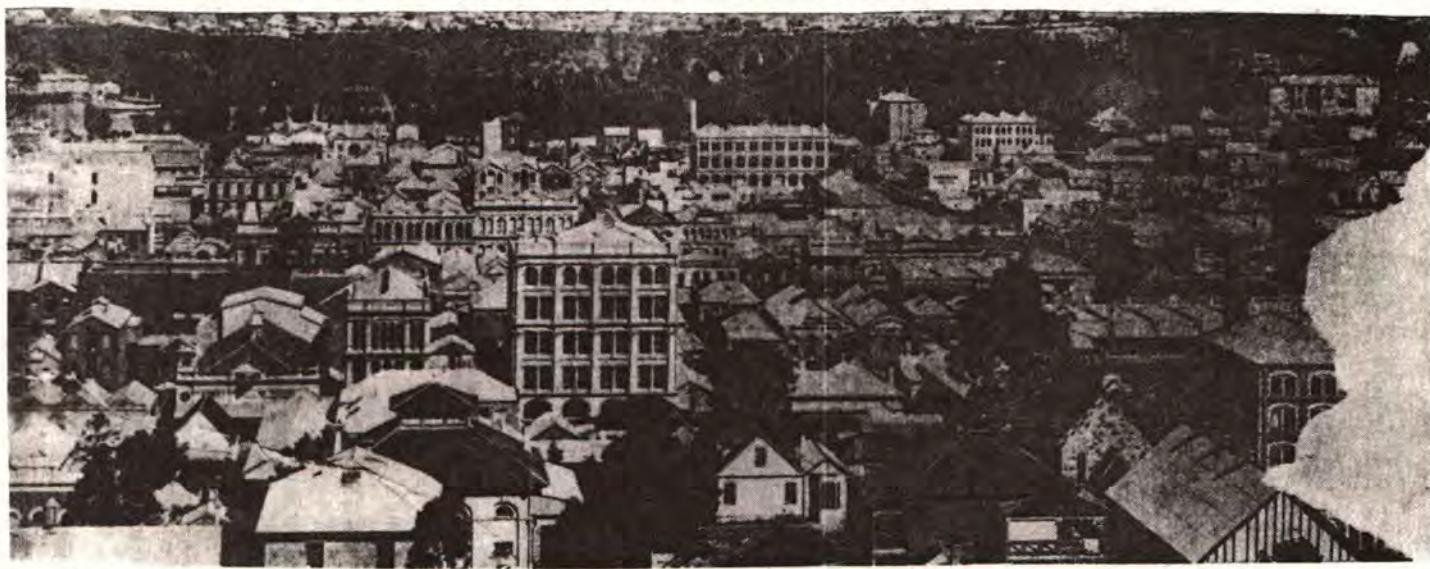
Thus old Frogs Hollow was really the red light district of Brisbane in 1888 - a rare clustering of drunkards, prostitutes, larrikins, thieves and assailants who, one way or another, lived off the visitors, mariners and new arrivals at the many boarding-houses, lodgings and hotels. As a cheap, convenient and lively location for wayfarers and residents, this area

catered for the 'uprooted', the 'deprived' and the 'outcast', including the Chinese - in marxist terms that 'lumpenproletariat' which somehow existed beyond the pale of European capitalist-proletarian society (see Davison & others 1985, White 1979). This area also sustained the same kinds of 'working-class' men and women who inhabited the inner suburbs, which were considered more suitable for family living. Some were labourers and factory hands, while many had particular skills as workers or masters. Others kept shop or ran hostelries and workshops of various kinds. However, many were day workers who lived elsewhere. As an offshoot of the city centre, this area also drew businessmen and office workers who administered the increasing number of commercial, mercantile and industrial concerns. Others were attracted to the shops, showrooms, clubs and churches, as well as the opium, gambling, brothel and public houses, to the street life itself and to the gardens nearby. Socially the whole area was just as much in a state of flux as its physical fabric.

To what extent this instability accounts for the tension between respectable society and its social outcasts, and amongst the criminal class itself, might be a suitable subject for some sociologically-minded historian. Did deterioration of the residential fabric, the harsh discipline of work and the unhealthy environment contribute towards the disintegration of stable social relationships? At the height of Brisbane's development as a colonial capital, all that contemporaries could really offer to the fringe-dwellers of old Frogs Hollow was a hope and a prayer:

Loudly and gaily the Yuletide was hailed in the snug homes of the suburbs, but not more jovially than it was hailed by the denizens of Albert-street. There was a crowd there also, a crowd that might have made the angels weep for the women fallen into the very depths and men fallen lower still. From Margaret-street townwards they gathered on the sidewalks and in the roadway, unrepentant Magdalenes and Larrikins, beside whom Judas Iscariot might be esteemed. Their Christmas greetings were oaths and ribaldry, their Christmas rejoicings were drunkenness and utter debauchery; from open doors, came the sounds of Baccanal songs, short-skirted girls ran hither and thither, beer-bottles and whiskey bottles in hand - Draw the curtain over them; remember that at Christmastide those must forgive who would be forgiven, think kindly of them for the sake of the prayers that living ones offered for the erring last night (BC 25 December 1886 in BHG 1987b, p.207).

Devoid of interest - hardly! But certainly a den of iniquity.



15 Old Frogs Hollow view 1888, looking east across Ann and Adelaide Streets towards Kangaroo Point, with Queensland Club (top right), Watson Brothers Building, Harper's Factory and Perkins Brewery against the Gardens.